administrative infrastructural and technical support to glaciological studies in the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra basins. While concerentrising details of this new initiative, the knowledge of the community of glaciologists in the country regarding the activities of Glaciology Research Centre, Moscow and Lanzhon Institute Glaciology and Geo-cryology, Chine have been taken into account.

Operationalising 'SARAS'

5505. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) by when the multi-role 'SARAS' Aircraft is likely to be test flown;

(b) when the work on this project was started and what was the target date for taking it to skies;

(c) the reasons for the delay in this regard; and

(d) the other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (d) The project on design fabrication and airworthiness testing of a multi-role Light Transport Aircraft 'SARAS' commenced after the financial sanction was issued on 24th September, 1999. The project envisaged building of two flying prototypes and one structural strength specimen and conducting flight tests leading to certification. The target for first flight of the first prototype was around 18 months from the date of release of funds *i.e.* by end of March, 2001. Owing to difficulties encountered in the procurement of crucial and critical parts from some Western Nations and unforeseen technological problems, which have now been overcome, the first test flight has been rescheduled to December, 2002.

Research on earthquake

5506. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to take up various new research activities on earthquake;

(b) if so, what are the details of the new research initiatives;